

## **Smyrna Historical Venues Docent**

**a. What is a docent?**

- i. A docent is a volunteer tour guide. They perform different tasks in the historic venues and work closely with the Event Coordinator. Docents lead tours for prospective venue renters. They provide historic, as well as rental, information for the venues.

**b. Roles of a docent**

- i. They serve as hosts to provide a welcoming atmosphere. In many cases they are the “front-line” representatives.
- ii. They serve as educators for the historic venues. Docents should be able to explain the history of each venue.
- iii. They assist in the rental process by describing possible events, setups, etc.

**c. Qualities of a docent**

- i. A sincere and genuine interest in people of all ages and their events.
- ii. A love for and excitement about learning and teaching about history and historic buildings.
- iii. Attention to detail and accuracy.
- iv. A sense of flexibility and cooperation.

**d. Characteristics of a docent**

- i. **PREPARED** – This means not only knowing your material, but also being on time and having everything you need for a tour.
- ii. **FRIENDLY** – You are the host/hostess, the front line for the City of Smyrna. Enthusiasm is contagious!
- iii. **GOOD VOICE/GOOD DRESS** – This relates back to being a good host/hostess. You may want to practice speaking with a tape recorder or have someone follow you to see if your voice is loud enough. Communication includes the eyes and face!
- iv. **INTERACTIVE** – The best tour is one in which the audience feels that they have participated. In addition, this demonstrates that the docent is responsive to the customer’s interests and needs.
- v. **RESPECTFUL** – We all come from different backgrounds and have unique beliefs and opinions. It is important to respect each person’s views and be open-minded to new information and cultures.
- vi. **GOOD JUDGEMENT** – This will help when explaining P&R policies and answering customers questions.
- vii. **YOU WON’T KNOW EVERYTHING** – While preparation is mandatory, we can’t know everything. Admit when you don’t and assist the visitor in finding out.

e. **QUALIFICATIONS AND COMMITMENTS**

- i. Attend all training sessions and have additional reading days or walkthroughs.
- ii. Commit to doing tours for at least two hours at a time.
- iii. Undergo a yearly evaluation with the Event Coordinator.
- iv. Commit to volunteering for at least 3 months. Docents must provide at least two weeks' notice prior to leaving and complete all tours assigned to them prior to their departure date.
- v. Commit to at least four shifts per month (shifts equal two - three hours). Leaves of absence must be sent to the Event Coordinator two weeks in advance.
- vi. Keep track of all hours volunteered (training and working).
- vii. Be able to use text and email to be in contact with the Event Coordinator.
- viii. Notify the Event Coordinator of changes in your schedule. In the case of an emergency, notify the office by 8:30 am.

The City of Smyrna plans to prepare prospective docents to deal with a variety of situations and aims to ensure that all volunteers benefit from and feel enriched by their experience as a Docent/Volunteer. We hope each volunteer benefits from the educational opportunities and camaraderie provided by the docent program.